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S E R M O N

PREACHED IN

GREENWICH CHURCH,

On *SUNDAY*, November 4, 1792.

BY

The Reverend A. BURNABY, D.D. *K*

ARCHDEACON OF LEICESTER,

AND VICAR OF GREENWICH.

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GREENWICH CHURCH

OF BUNSWAY ROAD & 1792



The Registrar General

ARCHDEACON

AND VICAR OF GREENWICH

LONDON

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NEW YORK

TO THE
KING AND QUEEN.

May it please your Majesties,

TO pardon the Liberty I take in inscribing to Your Majesties the following Discourse.

The Subject it treats of is of the highest concern to the Public Welfare: and being conscious that my Endeavour to inforce it are very inferior to its Importance, I presume to address it to Your Majesties; that by directing the Attention of the Reader to such distinguished Examples of the Duty recommended, I may compensate the Want of better Arguments, and give Weight and Authority to those I have adduced.

That

DEDICATION.

That Your Majesties may long live to enjoy every domestic Satisfaction, and to reign in the hearts of a free and happy people, is the ardent Wish and most fervent Prayer of,

Your Majesties ever dutiful Subject,

and Servant,

ANDREW BURNABY.

GREENWICH,

January 18, 1793.

S E R M O N.

DEUT. vi. 6, 7.

These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house; and when thou walkest by the way; and when thou liest down; and when thou risest up.

REVERENCE for the authority and laws of God is so essentially necessary to the present, as well as future, happiness of mankind; that too much care, too many precautions, cannot be used, to preserve and keep alive in the heart a due and constant sense of it.—If the mind is once divested of fear for the Supreme Being, and regard to his

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commandments;

commandments; nothing will be able to restrain it from the most atrocious and most nefarious actions. Reason, conscience, moral sense, municipal edicts, will all prove mere cyphers; and have no more weight than vain sounds or fleeting shadows: for to make any impression, or to have any influence, upon the mind, they must rest upon the basis, and be sanctioned by the authority of religion.

This probably was one, amongst other reasons, why the Almighty, in his infinite goodness and wisdom, thought fit to inculcate to the children of Israel, with so much awful solemnity in the words of the text, a constant and unremitted attention to this duty. "These words which I command thee this day, says he, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house; and when thou walkest by the way; and when thou liest down; and when thou risest up."

Nothing was to be undertaken, not a moment was to pass, not a word be spoken, nor a thought even conceived, without a strict regard to the will and injunctions of God.

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The precept was particularly addressed to the children of Israel; but it is of general import, and applies to us, and to the present age; as much as it did to them, and to the age in which they lived; for no truth was ever more firmly established; more clearly or more undeniably proved; than that every individual, every society, kingdom and community, in order to be prosperous and happy, must be under the influence of religion; and guided by a sacred regard to the divine laws. If any thing were wanting to corroborate this truth; instead of carrying you into the airy regions of fancy and speculation; instead of appealing to deductions or inferences of reason; I should only need to refer you to what is now transacting in a neighbouring kingdom, to the general astonishment and consternation of mankind.

A great and illustrious nation, eminently distinguished amongst the kingdoms of the world by its urbanity and politeness, by its learning and erudition, by its attainments in every elegant art and accomplishment, is suddenly fallen from the summit of worldly splendor, into an unfathomable abyss of wretchedness and misery. All example from antiquity, all precedent from the earliest to the present moment,

moment, falls infinitely short of the scene now exhibiting in France. It is not my province, nor indeed would it become me, to search for political reasons that may seem to have contributed to, and in part to have occasioned, so awful and astonishing a phenomenon. These I shall leave to be investigated in properer places, and by persons better qualified than myself for so arduous an undertaking. My duty confines me to a narrower sphere ; to a plainer and less intricate path: a path, that directly points to one single cause, prominent indeed before all others, for this prodigy of human wretchedness and depravity ; I mean an intire disregard and neglect of the precept delivered in the text ; or, in other words, a total want of reverence for the authority and laws of God. A general dereliction of religion, both natural and revealed, seems to have pervaded the whole French nation: the princes and the people, the governors and the governed, appear to have been alike infected with this crying and enormous sin. A false and delusive species of philosophy, rather let me say sophistry, for philosophy it was not ; vaunted and held forth by vain and superficial minds, had confidently assumed the place of right reason ; and by ridiculing every thing serious, by
flattering

flattering every sensual and inordinate passion, by scoffing at religion, and constantly making a mock at sin, had gradually undermined and weakened the foundations of all that was good and virtuous; and having finally and fatally succeeded in pulling down the sacred fabric of religion, had proudly and triumphantly erected its seat upon the vestiges and ruin of it. Atheism, impiety, profaneness, and vice of gigantic form, paraded uncontrouled throughout the land; and “as
 “ men did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God
 “ gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things
 “ which are not convenient:” *Rom. i. 28.* and disorder, tumult, anarchy, and confusion,—confusion hitherto unparalleled and without example;—rushed forth with a train of direful evils; and spreading desolation wide and near, overwhelmed in one common ruin the generations that had denied and forsaken their God. Was any thing better to have been expected? Was not this according to the natural course of things, so established by the wise and unerring decrees of providence? Innumerable examples stand recorded, both in sacred and profane history, of the judgments and visitations of God upon impious and unrighteous nations:

nations: Niniveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, Rome, and many others, are memorable instances of this awful truth: and did men suppose that the eyes of God were now waxed dim, that he could not see? that his ears were closed, that he could not hear? that his arms were shortened, that he could not reach, or inflict punishment? or, did they stupidly, with the fool, say in their hearts, there is no God? Unhappy, deluded people! God hath shewn himself to them in all his terrors: he hath visited them in anger, in judgment, and in justice. But it is not my intention to enlarge upon, either the crimes or the punishments, that threaten to overwhelm this devoted nation. What we have daily heard, or been witnesses to, for some time past, is sufficient to move every, even the most obdurate, heart; to draw tears from every eye. Let it rather be a subject of admonition to us. Let the example operate to our instruction and improvement. Let us be cautioned by it to avoid the rock; to steer wide of the gulf, that may otherwise draw us within its vortex; and swallow us up in like manner to our perdition. We are not, I fear, many degrees better than our neighbours: and while we are judging the crimes, and lamenting the miseries, of others;

others; it may possibly be said to us; "physician, heal thyself."

Many there are in this kingdom, I am afraid, who, if we may judge from their actions, have said in their hearts, "there is no God:" many more, "who carried about with diverse and strange doctrines," have no settled form of faith, no fixed principle of religion to act by. "They are tossed to and fro, carried about, with every wind of doctrine; by the sleight of men; and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." *Ephes. iv. 14.* But restlessness and changeableness in religion too commonly end in the rejection of all religion; for men not meeting with the perfection, vainly looked for and expected by them, either in the religion they have abandoned, or the one they have embraced;---and which indeed is no where to be found in this imperfect state of things;---they erroneously conclude, that there is no truth in any religion: and thus, like a lunatic, madly wishing to extinguish the sun; or refusing to avail himself of the light of it, because there are spots upon its disk; they foolishly reject and despise every blessing and advantage

advantage that is to be derived from this fountain of bliss and happiness.

But be impressed, I beseech you, with this interesting truth ; and let the impression be for ever fixed and engraved upon your minds ; that as all nature animate and inanimate, as the whole universe loudly proclaims a Supreme Being over-ruling the world ; so reason and common sense declare, that worship and obedience are due to this Supreme Being : therefore some religion, if traced to general and first principles, must be true : and although no religion, as professed and practised by any sect or description of men, may be absolutely perfect or free from error ; yet the established religion of this country is, I verily believe, as free from imperfection and error, both in regard to doctrine and discipline, as any now professed in the Christian world ; and if men meet not with satisfaction and contentment there, in vain will they search for it elsewhere. But be this as it may ; let men at least profess and practise some religion, and steadfastly hold fast and adhere to it : for as there is scarcely any religion, which doth not teach the great duties of morality ;
which

which doth not inculcate justice, mercy, truth, temperance, forbearance, subordination to law, and obedience to God and to civil government; so without religion it is impossible but that these virtues must be supplanted by injustice, cruelty, falsehood, intemperance, oppression, tyranny, and open rebellion against heaven and against earth. Therefore
 “ let the words, which God hath commanded us, be constantly in our hearts, and let us teach them diligently unto our children: and let us talk of them when we sit in our houses; and when we walk by the way; and when we lie down; and when we rise up.” In other words, let us be constant and uniform in the profession and practice of religion ourselves; and endeavour to encourage and promote the practice of it amongst others: particularly let us diligently teach and impress it upon the minds of our children.

This is the duty pointed out to us in the text; and to discharge which we are solemnly enjoined to exert the united influence of example and instruction.

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Example,

Example, the first of these means, is of the most prevailing nature ; its influence is as efficacious as extensive : and it is almost impossible that it be proposed without producing a correspondent effect. It operates with equal advantage to the author, and to the beholder. To the former it brings assurance of reward : to the latter it is as a light shining in a dark place. Therefore on all occasions to express a serious and devout sense of religion ; to be regular in attending upon divine worship ; and to be observant of those rules and duties which it prescribes ; cannot but be productive of the happiest consequences.

Did men who are prone to treat religion with levity ; who are indifferent about its rites, or inobservant of that worship which it prescribes, only consider the mischief which such levity and disregard immediately tend to introduce ; they could not, if they had any sense or feeling, but be struck with remorse and compunction.—More than one half of the human species are swayed by the example of the other half : it is therefore incredible, how much evil a bad example, and

and how much good a virtuous one may be productive of in this respect.

Instruction the other mean proposed, is the key of knowledge. It was hereby that all the saving truths, propined by Christ, have been communicated and made known to ourselves. Therefore it is intuitively clear, that they who employ their time and labour in instructing the young and ignorant in the knowledge of religion, must contribute to the promotion and success of it.

There have been times,----I think I may say better times,----when it was the usual delight and occupation of parents to instruct their children in the principles and duties of religion. They thought they could not do them a greater service, than by informing their minds of matters so essential to their happiness: and in general, I believe, the effect corresponded to the design. Sobriety, good order, and subordination, prevailed amongst the component parts of domestic society. Religion was the basis; respect, affection and gratitude, the cement of this goodly fabric.

fabric. But in these refined and polished times, men are
 satisfied with externals. They are careful that all about
 them make a genteel appearance; that their children are
 adorned with all the accomplishments and graces of external
 manners; but as to any information of their religious duty,
 or the truths of the gospel, they are totally unconcerned and
 indifferent about it. Hence that want of order; that want
 of reverence; that want of subordination; that want of
 virtue; and, which comprises all the rest, that want of
 religion, which so strongly marks and characterises the pre-
 sent age, may I think be deduced.—But do men consider
 what they are doing? do they know what they are leaving
 undone?—All these external accomplishments, without a
 principle or sense of religion to direct and regulate them,
 only lead to seduction, to vice, to misery both present and
 future.—Whereas a knowledge of the Gospel, and of those
 saving and eternal truths, which it unfolds, conduces to the
 most solid and permanent good and happiness. It gives
 lustre and effulgency to the graces of the body; and per-
 fection, as far as our nature will admit of it, to the mind.—
 Therefore men cannot do so kind an office to, or confer a
 more

more essential benefit upon, their children, than to impress it upon their minds. If they wish their children to be dutiful and obedient; if they wish them to be good subjects of the state; useful members of the community; or amiable partners or companions in private life; let them endeavour to make them good Christians: for if they be but good Christians, they can never be bad subjects, bad citizens, or bad men. Alas! What are all the embellishments, the graces, the acquirements of the most courtly and polite manners, without that last polish, that lustre and perfection, which is to be derived from, and only from the Gospel? Believe me they will avail,---may I not truly say---less than nothing. Let them then attend to this one thing needful: let them endeavour to form their minds to religion; and to perfect them in all the graces of the Gospel; and then will they not fail to render them bright and illustrious examples; fair and accomplished characters; and valuable and useful men. At the same time they will almost insure to them happiness and prosperity in this world: and, which is of infinitely more consequence, everlasting salvation in the world to come.

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most essential to the Christian's life is to be
in upon the world. If they wish their children to be
blessed and obedient, if they wish them to be good and
to the future, the all-around of the Christian; or rather
parents or guardians in general; if they be prepared
to make themselves good Christians; for if they be prepared
Christians, they can never be bad Christians, but rather
bad men. And: With me all the time, the
grace, the righteousness of the most country and people
means, without that this people, then there and perfection,
which is to be derived from, and only from the Gospel?
Believe me they will never--may I not say--let
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